

Libanius, *On the Silence of Socrates*

A First Translation and an Interpretation

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LIBANIUS (314—ca 393 A.D.), the last great pagan rhetorician and sophist, was born of a wealthy and distinguished Antioch family. In autumn 336 he began four years of somewhat reluctant study at Athens under the sophist, Diophantus. In 340 he traveled through Greece and the north. After an unsuccessful attempt in Constantinople he opened a school of rhetoric in 346 at Nikomedeia. Among his pupils was Celsus. The young Julian, in Nikomedeia at the time, dared not hear him, fearing the wrath of Constantine. After a brief and not entirely unsuccessful career in the civil service, Libanius returned to Antioch in 354 where he lived and taught until his death. An intimate already of Julian and his circle, he quickly became the most distinguished sophist of his day. Among his pupils were the Christians, John Chrysostom, to whom Libanius would have bequeathed his school "if the Christians had not won him," Theodore of Mopsuestia, Basil the Great, Gregory Nazianzene, and perhaps Ammianus Marcellinus.

Libanius was a voluminous writer and a number of his public orations have been preserved. Some, e.g., his Praise of Antioch, are of considerable historical value as well as literary merit. Fifty-one school declamations are extant and 143 "model essays" (progymnastika). There are also his Demosthenic hypotheseis and his biography of the orator written for his friend, the Proconsul Montius. There are 1605 Greek letters preserved under his name. Of especial interest is his autobiography (Oratio 1).

Throughout his writings he reveals considerable familiarity with classical authors, especially Demosthenes, Isocrates, Aeschines, Thucydides, Herodotus, Plato, the comic and tragic poets, Homer, and Pindar. There is a fairly strict avoidance of hiatus. His clausulae are regularly quantitative rather than accentual. He strives for good Attic but often his syntax is contorted. His conditions do not always fit into classical patterns and he is vague in his use of particles. He is fortunate in having had excellent editors (Reiske and Förster).

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Translation

IT IS DIFFICULT in your presence to say anything, even of what's wholly just, in behalf of Socrates, for you have condemned him out of prejudice and have believed the original slanderous attacks made on him. Nevertheless, since the informers have gone to extremes and have treated unjustly not only Socrates but also a law¹ which applies to all unlucky men, it is necessary to say this much to you, that although many men were condemned by you in the past and were executed unjustly or justly, none died in silence.

[2] You ordered Socrates to die and he obeys quite meekly, but these men have imposed on him a second penalty, namely to keep silent before his death and to converse with no one, thus killing him even before the hemlock does. Now this is easy for Socrates, for just as he can speak, so he can be quiet; but you must beware lest you be blamed by gods and men for taking away from Socrates a good shared by all who are still alive and depriving him at once of his body and, before that, of his voice.²

[3] I am one of those who go to Socrates regularly for instruction and listen to him. For indeed it is wonderful how he philosophizes in prison and dies joyfully; and I stood up to oppose the man who spoke this harsh judgement, believing that it would be not his loss but ours if we were not to have some small benefit from the last days of Socrates.³

[4] In truth, contrary to all that is just, Socrates has been falsely accused and has been pressed with charges which are untrue and most unworthy of his philosophy. He will die who was the most godfearing of all men, of all men the most helpful to the young, who was always obedient to the laws of the city both as a citizen and as a soldier, but opposed himself to the tyrants and the oligarchies, who alone did not require the payment of fees from those who came to him for instruction, who to the best of his ability not

¹For the law, cf. 8 *infra*.

²The Greek is awkward here.

³Libanius uses Socrates' name with greater frequency than is elegant in English.

only was master of his own evil inclinations but also made many others into good men, and has caused his city to be renowned and to be admired by Greece, both through the visitors who gather around him and through his words, which issue forth from him in all directions.

[5] Indeed, I believe that time and the gods will show that Socrates is such a man and has been falsely accused, and that the jury brought in its verdict sooner than was right; and I pray that this will happen without divine retribution and without public harm to the city. And this I know well, that those who judged Socrates would have repented of their decision if they had been afforded the opportunity of pronouncing a second time, just as you once did regarding Mytilene.

[6] But after those prevailed who bore Socrates ill-will because he might yet refute their arguments, you heard him discussing philosophy even in court; for he did not weep nor beg nor devise an escape, a shameful thing and unworthy of philosophy; but he obeyed the god who has led him to this end, and he happily followed the Eleven and went to prison as joyfully as he would the Lyceum, the Academy, the Ilissus or his other resorts; and there he was ready to engage in conversation. Could it be otherwise with a man who still lived and breathed? And eagerly he joined with his friends in the pursuit of wisdom, for he is Socrates; and though he was imprisoned he was not dismayed by mere physical misfortune, and his conversation was so godly and beautiful that if you had all heard it you would undoubtedly have released him.

[7] Socrates is to be congratulated that, with death standing beside him, he rejoices and ungrudgingly talks and discusses philosophy with those who listen to him and are able to gain some profit to serve them throughout their lives. But Anytus and Meletus were harsher even than the jailer. He has allowed Socrates visitors, but they have rendered his time of grace useless to us and have contrived these new bonds for him; not only are Socrates' hands and feet bound before his death, but also his tongue.

[8] O what malice! What stupidity! What ignorant wickedness!

Shall Socrates not speak, Apollo, even though he is still alive and possesses the faculty of speech? But this present day Solon is writing a statute “against a man”, a thing expressly and distinctly forbidden by the laws — “Nor to write a law or statute against a man, unless it apply in common to all Athenians.”⁴

[9] “He is wicked and has been condemned.” Granted “he is wicked.” Let no word of the indictment or of the clamoring of Anytus and Meletus be disbelieved. I know well that there will be a time in which you will revere Socrates, as the Ephesians do Heraclitus, and the Samians Pythagoras, and the Lacedaemonians Chilon, and the Milesians Thales, and the Lesbians Pittacus, and the Corinthians Periander, and you yourselves once Solon. For while they are alive, wise men are opposed by the ill-will of those near them; but, when they have died, their wisdom is judged solely from impressions formed without prejudice.

[10] Very well then, let the decision which has been reached stand. In that case it is fitting that judgment be given in accordance with the decision of the court. It was decided that Socrates should drink hemlock just like any of the others who had been condemned before him. Socrates does not refuse to do this nor would he at any time flee the penalty you have imposed upon him, nor leave the city even if, among his friends, some wish to carry him off to Boeotia, others to the Peloponnesus, and others to Thessaly, and all the cities of Greece call him; nor would he permit a stolen deliverance. Quite the reverse; somehow or other he desires his death more than you do and he thirsts after the hemlock.

[11] Is it not illegal and reprehensible after the verdict to pass in a decree an additional sentence, which was not passed by the jury and is not specified in the laws dealing with the condemned? It is not necessary for everyone to bestow on the condemned more kindness than is required by law, nor, on the other hand, to be harsher than is customary. For each of these things, both to inflict

⁴The Greek is obscure. I have followed οὗτος for τοιοῦτον (T. A. Suits *per litt.*) and deleted the interrogation point. B. Otis suggests ἄρα or ἄρ for ἄλλ’ and renders “Is it Solon then who prescribes such a law of attainder?” The sense of the whole then becomes “Socrates not to speak? Is it Solon then who forbids him? No the prohibition lies in the face of the [Solonian] constitution.”

additional penalties on the condemned and to take away what is suitable to those in such a situation, is against the law. Moreover, the court herald did not announce that the Eleven were to take charge of Socrates and order him to be quiet until his death, and not to speak, but only to die.

[12] And you, accusers of Socrates, when you determined upon the penalty of death for him, did not add also that of silence. For in that case there would be two penalties. Furthermore, that additional penalty which you did not impose at the very height of the jury's rage of delusion, you now devise in excess of all previous laws.

[13] Now if Socrates is guilty of some newer crime and you are bringing charges against him after the verdict of the jury, over and above what was previously noted in the indictment, tell us so; explain. If your complaint is that he talks and chats, who in the world was ever punished for that? Was silence ever one of the prohibitions imposed on a condemned man? Who was brought before the people for talking? Did anyone of those condemned to die at Athens ever have his tongue cut off? You are making us Thracians instead of Athenians and instead of Greeks, barbarians.

[14] Once Miltiades also was imprisoned among you; but though imprisoned he was not silent. Once you condemned nine generals who were innocent against the will of Socrates and without his participating in that lawless action (on the contrary he thought that the law was more important than anger). You condemned them, but you did not order even them to be silent.

[15] This is indeed a sorry situation: murderers and robbers of temples and traitors and men who have dared to commit the greatest crimes pay the penalty, but are ordered by no one to be silent and not to converse. Some give solemn instructions to those dearest to them, some converse with their immediate family, some with friends and relatives, some call upon the gods, some bemoan their fate; but in this one case alone out of all history will it occur that a man condemned to die, but most worthy of talking, was ordered not to talk.

[16] Critias alone, when he was one of the tyrants, gave Socrates orders to refrain from conversation; Critias, who, proving to be an unsatisfactory pupil, condemned Socrates. And so the democracy has become an imitator of the tyranny and in making this judgment Athenians are enacting laws equal to the edicts of the tyrants.

[17] And yet Critias forbade Socrates conversation only with young men, but not altogether, so long as he avoided analogies involving shepherds and herdsmen, being angry with the Socratic analogy that it was the part of bad shepherds to reduce the flock, a statement which Socrates really did make in denunciation of the tyrants. But you refuse Socrates all conversation, either with the jailer or with Xanthippe or with his little children. But if Lamprocles or Sophroniscus asks his father a question, will Socrates make no answer, but only await the hemlock with a bit in his mouth, deprived of the common freedom of all men, even the unlucky and the wicked?

[18] Man is by nature a talkative creature, and the people of Athens are especially talkative and in love with talk. And when death is near they are gripped by a certain garrulousness and a desire to say and hear many things, since in a short time their powers to do so will be at an end. For it is no reproach to say as much as you like when soon you will keep a long silence.

[19] "Let Socrates await the hemlock in silence," he says, "for Theramenes also died in silence." But before he died Theramenes said many things at the council hearth. And when some 1500 men drank the hemlock under the oligarchy, not one of whom died because of Socrates, he was ordered to go to Leon the Salaminian; but he would not obey nor bring the man to the tyrants to be executed. Although those who perished at that time were so many, none is said to have drunk the potion in silence. Not a man was ordered to keep back a single word or protest before his death, not by Dracontides, or Pison, or Charicles, or any of the others.

[20] But you are giving Socrates here an order much crueller than the actions of the harshest tyranny. Men must cry out when they are under the surgeon's knife, and in prison a man will weep. But shall he, who will soon lose his very life, die without echoing

a single word to a single person and will be even before his death a lifeless corpse? You are causing Socrates to die many times.

[21] The philosophers say that ghosts have voices and that this property is left even to shades, and Homer too seems to indicate this. For when he describes the appearance of the shade of Patroclus, he says that it is altogether the same as before both in body and in voice. But you are cutting the voice out of Socrates while he is still alive. All other men are unusually talkative in time of misfortune. It is said that the son of Croesus the Lydian, though dumb before, broke into speech at a time of danger for his father. Shall Socrates alone in his present circumstance neither weep nor call upon the gods?

[22] Now this is not Socratic behavior. Even he should be guaranteed his common rights. But everyone else who is in prison talks and chats, and each, when he is near death, even if he is an unschooled layman, philosophizes on the subject of death itself. Shall not Socrates then be allowed to end his life and his philosophy together?

[23] "He says things which are neither meet nor just." This is their contention. Is it not indeed for this reason that he is to be put to death? Since you have no further charge to add to the one on which he was convicted, do not inflict on him a penalty greater than what was prescribed. "But he corrupts the young." But what young boy has entered the prison? Apollodorus and Crito and Phaedo and Simmias and Cebes, Hermogenes, old men, are the disciples of Socrates. If Socrates' conversation is evil and harmful, surely these men were corrupted long ago. But if it is good and profitable, it is not just at this time to deprive them of it.

[24] Therefore leave him alone and do not stand in his way. Is it not disgraceful that Gorgias and Protagoras speak and Polus and Prodicus the quack, and Hippias, sophists, word peddlers, and that Greeks pay money to listen to them publicly and privately, men who are Eleans and Ceans and Aberites and Leontines, but that the Athenian Socrates must even before his death remain silent?

[25] You will have your fill of silence from Socrates, you slanderers. Not only will the Lyceum be dumb but also the Academy, and the wrestling grounds will be mute. Rudeness and silence will choke the conversations of the noble. Not in the gymnasiums will Socrates speak, not in the colonnades, not in the Royal Stoa will he converse with people, not in the Painted Hall, not at the money-changers' tables, not in the courts, not in the house of Agathon, not in the house of Callias, not in the house of Damon, not in the city, not in the Peiraeus, not by the Ilissus under the beautiful plane tree, but there the cicadas will sing, not at Potidaea, not at Delium, not on justice with Thrasymachus, not on moderation with Charmides, not on courage with Laches, not on brotherly love with Chaerephon, not on virtue with Meno, not on the beautiful with Hippias, not on rhetoric with Gorgias, not with Protagoras on the practice of virtue, not on piety with Euthyphro, not with Xenophon on not kissing the beautiful boy. You will have your fill of the absence of Socrates. He will keep a long silence for you.

[26] Now, while he is still with us give him these one or two days to talk. Now especially is the wisdom of Socrates put to the test, if in bonds he is not pained and though about to die he does not wail, and philosophizes with death upon him. Let him speak though he be in bonds. I praised Xenophon too, because, when imprisoned in Thebes, he did not neglect the discourses of Prodicus but posted bail and went to hear him. Do you think that the pupil should be a better philosopher than the teacher, and do you force Socrates to be silent when he will cease so soon? Why do you make him resemble a man in grief? Surely, let him speak before the end, since he is all the nearer to the truth.

[27] Let him now discuss philosophy. I also ask you to let him make a prophecy. Swans sing before their death and let go their lives in song, and musical is the death of a musical bird. Allow to sing both the Attic nightingale and the swan. Socrates is a fellow slave along with them and he is blessed of Apollo. Once you announced, O Pythian One, "Of all men Socrates is wisest." But the wisest of men is now ordered to die as a wise man should not.

[28] At times in the past also there were unjust judgements. Once it was unjustly decided that Palamedes, the wisest of the Greeks of his time, should be put to death; for there were also at Ilium certain Anytuses and Meletuses. He, however, was not ordered to be silent before his death, but was permitted both to speak and to write, and writing his fate on an oarblade he sent to his father, Nauplius, a letter bearing the news of his death.

[29] Socrates, however, does not write one malicious or bitter thing, nor does he bear the jury a grudge, but he dies rejoicing and goes away obediently to the gods. Just as he was when speaking during his life, so is he now in conversation. Do not be surprised. This is the nature of wise men. Their wisdom does not leave them, not even in times of bad fortune.

[30] Music did not leave Orpheus after his death. The Thracian women tore him to pieces, just as the false accusers have Socrates. But though torn apart he still sang. The head of Orpheus went down the river Strymon singing its songs. A Phrygian fluteplayer Marsyas, who had been punished, wished to exchange his gifts^b and could not do this. But he heard another man playing and came to life again at the song. So it is with Socrates also.

[31] Now do not hate nor mistrust philosophy. Can it be that you fear he will pray to the gods against you if he converses? But when he was speaking he did no such thing. Besides, a man could do this even in silence. Do you shrink from bringing him the hemlock when he is engaged in conversation? But when he is silent he is not Socrates. Allow him to speak as at a banquet. Let him drink a health to the deity.

[32] Just now when he was seen to be joyous and glad in his misfortune, and said what he said, I was certain that Socrates' accusers had been refuted. What did he say that caused you to order him to be silent? What attack did he make on the government, the laws, the civil authorities or the traditions handed down by our ancestors? Now as always he philosophizes most piously on behalf

^bI have translated MSS δῶρα; but Professor B. Otis ingeniously suggests δοράν *skin*, cf. Ael. *VH* 13.21.

of the laws, and he says that he will never flee these his masters or be a metic among Megarians or Boeotians or a guest of Peloponnesians or Thessalians, but that he will remain here and obey the decision of Athenians.

[33] O Socrates, you who are most law-abiding and of all the men I know most in love with Athens to the very end, not even now do you wish to be away from Athens. No, he composes and plays songs and, though imprisoned, hymns the gods and now sings odes to Apollo. For at the end of his life Socrates became a poet. But you do not allow Socrates to speak even in prose.

[34] Your orders are contrary to the wishes of the god. O Apollo, on purpose you keep back the Delian ship as a hostage for Socrates and you do not send the holy vessel to Athens, thus giving your servant more days to live; and you order the winds not to carry the ship to Athens, so that Socrates may continue to philosophize. But these men are making your favor profitless.

[35] "Socrates is not to talk," he says, "not even if there are hearers present or Socrates himself wishes it." When in pain from his fetters he lifts up his legs to go to sleep, shall he say nothing about this? Shall he not philosophize on the relation of pleasure and pain? Simmias and Cebes ask him a question about the soul. Shall he not speak on this subject? While Thebans⁶ philosophize shall an Athenian remain silent? He is about to die and he is joyful. This is what especially excites the wonder of his friends. Is he not to converse — how can it be? Not even if there is anyone who believes that the soul is immortal? If he owes a sacrifice to the gods shall he not bid one of his friends offer it? Even though he is about to drink the hemlock, shall he not make his customary drink offerings and prayers?

[36] For what does he say that is troublesome or untimely? Another man at the time of his death gives instructions regarding his property or his children or on the handling and burial of his body. But Socrates sits quietly, saying that there is no need to weep or moan or to think that the present life will prove to be the only

⁶I have translated the emendation of W. M. Calder III in *AJP* 81 (1960) 314: *Θηβαῖοι* for MSS *'Αθηναῖοι*.

one, but that another life waits to receive us longer than our bodily one; and when we are released from bones and flesh and all this prison, whether it is to be called a body or a tomb, we each shall go away to a just dispensation; that while we are alive we must pursue wisdom and think of life as a training for death, remembering the great number of the ancient lessons surrounded by which we remain here, as we believe; but when our allotted destiny comes, we must be borne light and through the air to our masters the gods and the spirits who judge souls and assign to those who live with purity and justice and who with true philosophy have held themselves aloof from earthly things, attendance upon the gods and the course above the heavens and a vision of justice itself and of the Beautiful and of Immortality and of blessed Souls. But for those who have lived lawlessly and immorally, their souls filled with many impieties, there are Tartaruses and Cocytuses and Pyriphlegethons as receptions and terrible chastisements and eternal punishments in fire and darkness and weird rivers driven in an unending course.

[37] These are the words of Socrates, these his instructions, this is the will of Socrates. Who will begrudge us a share in the immortality of Socrates? Allow us to hear him again and to confirm these hopes of happiness. It is no matter to Socrates; for even if he does not speak, a long life awaits him and many conversations and the gods will be his hearers. To them he will speak, being set free he will philosophize, with them he will discuss all things. But for us, who will be left orphaned of Socrates, it is a terrible thing if no one of us will ask him any questions on any of our disputes or on these matters in particular, and if no one of us gains any benefits from the last hours of Socrates.

[38] Apollo, please stay the ship yet longer; let the festival at Delos continue to move slowly. I have questions to ask Socrates about speech and silence and salvation. And you, false accusers, permit us to benefit from Socrates while he is still alive. Alas, perhaps the ship will come today. This was foretold Socrates in a dream. Do not begrudge us one day. And perhaps even now, while I am busy here, Socrates converses with his friends. Words

such as these one can hear from the friends of Socrates who have listened to him speak, but not such words as one can hear from Socrates himself.

[39] I ask you, Socrates, the opposite of what these men order, to speak not only while you are alive nor with mortal tongue alone, but also to speak after you drink the hemlock. And do not stop speaking even when you die. I believe you: the soul is completely immortal, especially your soul. If any of the spirits of the wise visit the souls of their friends, do not be silent, but speak to us in dreams Socrates, as now do the gods.

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An Interpretation

THE CONTRIVED SITUATION strikes one as odd. It is a day in Athens in 399 B.C. Meletus and his associates have recently secured the condemnation of Socrates. The execution has been stayed because of a delay in the return of the sacred ship from Delos. Not satisfied with what they have already gained, the prosecutors have petitioned the state to forbid Socrates, who is confined to prison, to speak with anyone, even with his wife, his children, or the jailer (§17). Libanius' piece is the imagined rebuttal. A nameless student of Socrates (§3) pleads in his favor. The speech pretends to be delivered to the *ekklesia* assembled at the Pnyx.¹

Why does it all seem so odd? There are a number of reasons. First there is no testimony that such a motion was ever entertained in 399. Indeed there is no parallel for such procedure, legislative or judicial, in the known constitutional history of classical Athens. Libanius is quite right in holding (§§1, 14, 15, 19, 22) that there is no precedent. Not even Theramenes is relevant (§19). Plato's *Crito* and *Phaedo* show on the contrary that Socrates was quite voluble to the end. Further there existed no reasonable motive, such as fear of further corruption of the youth (§23), that he might incite the gods against the citizens (§31) or advocate treason (§32), which could have precipitated a motion that would quickly encounter the charge of being *παράνομος*. Libanius is quite right that such a proposal is unjust (§4), reprehensible and illegal as well (§§8, 11), that is, contrary to the laws of Solon because it is *ad hominem* legislation (Andocides, *de Mysteriis* 87).

Besides the inherent absurdity of the fundamental situation and before turning to details, there are two aspects of the work

¹The clue is the terminology of §§ 11 and 16, *ψηφίσματος* and *ψηφισαμένοις*, not applicable to a law-court. The attempt of Karl Meiser, "Zu den Deklamationen des Libanios über Sokrates," *SBAW* (1910) No. 6, p. 8 to narrow the dramatic date to three days before Socrates' death is not convincing. I see no force in the comparison of §38 with Pl. *Crito* 43d nor in the citation of §§3 and 26. The speaker could not know the date of the ship's arrival and thus the indefiniteness in the Libanian passages cited by Meiser. Meiser discusses the *de Silentio* at pp. 8, 23-26. His paper is especially valuable for the gathering of relevant Platonic passages but his emendations are often capricious.

that deserve notice. Why does the speaker remain nameless? The citizens would want to know who was talking to them. If it were Crito, for example, a rehearsal of his benefits to the state or of his righteous life or of his qualifications as a character witness for Socrates could provide a valuable *captatio benevolentiae* and enhance a chance for success. And why are only two accusers mentioned throughout (§§7, 9, 28)? There is never a word about Lyco. Libanius certainly knew about him (*Apology* 1).

There are a number of other puzzling details. Let us work through the speech and isolate them. I do not include such an occasional and obvious anachronism as the *court herald* (§11). Actually the *archon basileus* would have made the announcement after the tabulation of the second ballot. Also the suggestion of praying "even in silence" (§31) is certainly not appropriate to fifth century Attica.

It may be a trifle misleading to say (§4) that Socrates "has caused his city to be renowned and admired among Greeks, both through travelers who come to visit him, and through his words which he sends about in every direction." Except for military service, Socrates never left Athens; and, but for a few feeble poetic efforts in prison (§33), Socrates never wrote anything. How then could he send his words about in every direction? There is the implication (§§13, 21) of an actual cutting out of Socrates tongue. Such mutilation is alien to Athenian scruples and there is justice in the accusation (§13), "You are making us Thracians instead of Athenians and instead of Greeks, barbarians." See Herodotus *passim* and the catalogue of atrocities in Aeschylus, *Eumenides* 185ff. At §23 Epigenes and Phaedo are called old men. But Phaedo was a youth in 399 (Plato, *Phaedo* 89b) and Epigenes' father was present at the trial (Plato, *Apology* 33e2). The conduct of Apollodorus (see Burnet on *Phaedo* 59a9) at the end does not suggest senility (§23). Protagoras (§24) is represented as alive in 399. It is implied at §25 that Socrates used to speak in the courts. This contradicts Plato, *Apology* 17d, where Socrates says that he is in court for the first time. The speaker (§26) observes: "I praised Xenophon too because when imprisoned in Thebes he did not neglect the discourses of

Prodicus, but posted bail and went to hear him. Do you think that the pupil would be a better philosopher than the teacher?" The anecdote is repeated at Philostratus, *Lives of the Sophists* I. 12.² There is no early testimony. But whether history or fiction, the remark is not in point, for Prodicus is talking and not the imprisoned Xenophon, who merely listens, while Libanius is interested in allowing Socrates to talk, not merely to listen. The suggestion (§31) that Socrates might pray to the gods against his prosecutors is not compatible with the lofty morality of the Platonic dialogues. Whatever is meant (§37) by the strange question "Who will begrudge us a share in the immortality of Socrates?" The final apostrophe (§39) is enigmatic if applied to the historical Socrates. "I ask you to speak after you drink the hemlock. And do not stop speaking even when you die."

These then are the embarrassing points that trouble a reader who insists on an historical interpretation of Libanius' speech. The piece is naive, if not inept. One sees why Foerster felt that it was written *a Libanio praesertim adulescente*.³ This is the polite solution. Markowski, Münscher, and Schmid acquiesced.⁴ Conviction may have been premature. It is salutary to recall that Libanius was a professor, well read and intelligent. He knew Plato better than many moderns.⁵ Could the critics be at fault rather than the author? It is time to ask an essential question: is an historical approach, *sc.* an approach that applies the speech to the historical Socrates of 399, relevant? Is there an interpretation that will obviate the difficulties? I venture to suggest one which has the appeal of receiving the work not as a naive *Jugendschrift* but an important and moving document of historical interest.

The suggestion is simply that the pleading is intended as a protest against Christian encroachment upon the old pagan edu-

²The note of W. C. Wright, *Philostratus and Eunapius, The Lives of the Sophists* (Cambridge 1952) 37 n. 4, "There is no other evidence for this imprisonment of Xenophon," must be corrected.

³R. Foerster, *Libanii Opera* 5 (Leipzig 1909) 123 n. 1.

⁴H. Markowski, *De Libanio Socratis defensore* (Breslau 1910); Foerster-Münscher, *RE* 24 (1925) 2510; Schmid-Stählin, 2. 2. 994 n. 2.

⁵See E. Richsteig, *Libanius qua ratione Platonis operibus usus sit* (Diss. Breslau 1918) *passim*.

cation. Socrates is not meant to be the historical figure, but a symbol of pagan intellectual *paideia*. How does this supposition dispel the difficulties noticed above?

That the fundamental situation is imaginary becomes easily explicable. Libanius saw that it would be rhetorically more effective to preach his sermon in the guise of a dramatic allegory rather than baldly to expound ten reasons why the Christians should tolerate classical *paideia*. A strict classicist, he would naturally turn to the golden age of Athens to find the figure exemplifying the highest pagan intellectual achievement — Socrates. The philosopher's condemnation, imprisonment, and execution were historical events. The motion for enforced silence was an ingenious innovation to represent Christian suppression of the old education. The pleader is not named for he is Libanius himself, the actual speaker, the student of classical letters. Only Meletus and Anytus prosecute Socrates. Meletus, the religious fanatic, who prosecuted Andocides in the same year, is the Church. Anytus, the ancient politician, is the State. The presence of Lyco, who in 399 represented the aggrieved rhetors and sophists, would embarrass the allegory. Libanius is a rhetor and a sophist and the *defender* of Socrates. Lyco must be ignored.

The puzzling details are clarified quickly. Classical *paideia* has made Athens renowned and admired among the Greeks by the *logoi* which it has sent about in every direction, *sc.* educated men over the inhabited world have read the classical authors.⁶ To cut out Socrates' tongue refers to banning the teaching of the classics. Teachers are the voice of the old culture. To quiet them is to cut out its tongue. That in 399 the historical Epigenes, Phaedo, and perhaps Apollodorus were not old men is irrelevant. It is a vivid way of saying that Libanius does not teach infants matter that will corrupt them. His students are mature men, able to look objectively at what they are told. So with Protagoras, the catalogue of sophists has contemporary reference. They represent other teachers, probably incompetent Christian ones. The remark that Socrates used to speak

⁶Professor Downey warns me that it would not be impossible for this to mean simply that Socrates talked to everyone remarking "Themistius compared himself to Socrates in this respect, implying that in Themistius' and Libanius' day it was not customary to talk with all comers."

in the courts does not refer to the historical man at all, but is a means of alluding to the Canon of the Ten Orators. The reference to Xenophon who, when imprisoned in Thebes, posted bail and went to hear Prodicus, implies Julian who, when banished by Constantius to Cappodocia "continued the study of ancient writers under Mardonius."⁷

On one level the analogy remains illogical but the reason for it is not careless composition. The assurance that Socrates will not turn the gods against his prosecutors means that the old classical culture is tolerant (it is the Christians who were not) and will not harbor treasonous ideas. "Who will begrudge us a share in the immortality of Socrates?" is a beautiful way of saying "Who will begrudge us a share in the immortal legacy of Greece?" The final apostrophe becomes a moving prayer. Do not stop speaking even when you die. It was prophetic as well. There were the few who vindicated Libanius and preserved the tradition for Erasmus.

It is superfluous to pursue the allegory through each sentence. A sensitive reader who studies Mr. Crosby's careful translation will see the *double entendre* in many places. Especially from section 29 until the end Libanius almost breaks through the fiction. His words are noble and moving. There is tragic pathos in the apostrophes to Apollo and Socrates. The eschatology at §36 is no longer garbled Neo-Platonism. With great care Libanius has tried to make Socratic teachings of the other world as acceptable as possible to a Christian audience. It is difficult to read the chapter without exclaiming "How very Christian!" Libanius wants to say that there is really not much difference.

There is a deeply personal note in §37. Libanius is convinced that the literature will never entirely perish. "But for us, who will be left orphaned of Socrates, it is a terrible thing if he does not speak on our disputes or on these matters and if none of us gains any benefits from the last hours of Socrates." And then (§38) "Apollo, please stay the ship yet longer; let the festival at Delos continue to move slowly. I have questions to ask Socrates." But the last of the great pagan educators ends on a note of exultation.

⁷A. A. Vasiliev, *History of the Byzantine Empire 324-1453* (Madison 1952) 69.

"I believe you: the soul is completely immortal, especially your soul . . . do not be silent, but speak to us in dreams, Socrates as do now the gods."

An allegorical use of the Socrates-figure ought not to alarm us. Intimations of Julian have been suspected in Libanius' *Apology*. A careful study still needs doing.⁸ Ammianus Marcellinus, perhaps a student of Libanius,⁹ clearly has the scene of *Phaedo* in mind, when he describes the death of Julian (25. 3. 23; cf. Libanius 18. 272), "cum Maximo et Prisco philosophis super animorum sublimitate perplexius disputans." And the literary, oratorical allegory is the quintessence of the man. "Rede, Studium, Bücher sind seine Welt."¹⁰

An allegorical interpretation reveals in the work a power and depth, not to speak of rhetorical cleverness and skill, that puts out of court its contemptuous dismissal as a *Jugendschrift*. I should place the work at the end of the sophist's life, the period of disillusionment and despair that followed on the death of Julian and has been so well described by Walden.¹¹ I should even consider the possibility of posthumous publication. This would be compatible with the erratic palaeographical fate of the work.¹² It is a not reprehensible epitaph.

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⁸Dr. T.A. Suits and I are preparing the first translation of this speech into English. There is a German version available by Otto Apelt, *Libanius Apologie des Sokrates* (Leipzig 1922). Apelt has Jowett's habit of evading commitment in difficult passages but his introduction and notes are valuable.

⁹Schmid-Stählin, *op. cit.* 989, who cite Liban. *Ep.* 983W.

¹⁰*Ibid.* 997.

¹¹John W. H. Walden, *The Universities of Ancient Greece* (New York 1909) 117-121.

¹²See Foerster, *op. cit.* 123-126. The work was not known to Reiske, whose famous edition was posthumously published by his widow in 1784 and 1791-1797, but was first edited by Jacob Morelli in 1785. I am grateful to Professor Glanville Downey and Dr. T. A. Suits who have generously and beneficially read my transcript. I have made use throughout of Mr. Crosby's accurate translation of the speech.